

IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~striethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please AMEND claims 1, 12, and 13, and ADD new claim 14 in accordance with the following:

1. (Currently Amended) A wheel support bearing assembly, comprising:
 - an outer member having an inner peripheral surface formed with a plurality of outer raceways;
 - an inner member positioned inside the outer member with an annular working space defined between it and the outer member, said inner member having an outer peripheral surface formed with inner raceways in mating relation with the respective outer raceways in the outer member;
 - rows of rolling elements accommodated within the annular working space and rollingly received in part within the outer raceways in the outer member and in part within the inner raceways in the inner member; and
 - at least one sealing member fitted to one of the inner and outer members sealing one of opposite open ends of the annular working space delimited between the inner and outer members, said sealing member having an approximately ~~constant~~ uniform annular cross section and a plurality of elastic sealing lips which extend towards a sealing surface defined directly on the other of the inner and outer members or defined on a sealing contact member fitted to the other of the inner and outer members, one of said elastic sealing lips extending in a direction generally axially inwardly of the annular working space and defining an axially innermost sealing lip while the other elastic sealing lips being kept in sliding contact with the sealing surface;
 - wherein the innermost sealing lip is a non-contact sealing lip leaving a gap between a free end thereof and the sealing surface of the sealing contact member, a size of the entire gap gradually increases in a direction away from the sealing surface area and inwardly of the annular working space, said gap being of a size sufficient to
 - permit flow of air therethrough, and
 - prevent a lubricant from passing therethrough and to provide a non-contact sealing effect when a relative rotation takes place between the outer and inner members.

2. (Original) The wheel support bearing assembly as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the at least one sealing member includes a core metal and an elastic member rigidly mounted on the core metal and wherein all of the elastic sealing lips are an integral part of the elastic member.

3. (Original) The wheel support bearing assembly as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the gap is defined in a radial direction between a free end face of the axially innermost sealing lip and the sealing surface

4. (Original) The wheel support bearing assembly as claimed in Claim 3, wherein the free end of the axially innermost sealing lip extends inwardly of the annular working space between the inner and outer members.

5. (Original) The wheel support bearing assembly as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the free end face of the axially innermost sealing lip which confronts the sealing surface has a width, as measured in a direction across a thickness of the axially innermost sealing lip, which is greater than that of any one of the remaining elastic sealing lips.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Original) The wheel support bearing assembly as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the sealing contact member includes a cylindrical wall and an radially upright wall protruding radially outwardly from the cylindrical wall so as to render the sealing contact member to represent a generally L-sectioned configuration, and wherein the innermost elastic sealing lip confronts a first portion of the sealing surface defined on an outer peripheral surface of the cylindrical wall and at least one of the remaining elastic sealing lips is held in sliding contact with a second portion of the sealing surface defined on the radially upright wall that confronts the sealing member.

9. (Original) The wheel support bearing assembly as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising a ring-shaped multi-pole magnet secured to the sealing contact member, said multi-pole magnet magnetized to have a plurality of opposite magnetic poles alternating with each other in a direction circumferentially thereof.

10. (Original) The wheel support bearing assembly as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the inner member has one end formed with a flange which extends radially outwardly beyond a level of an outer periphery of a cylindrical portion of the outer member and wherein the sealing member is used to seal one of the opposite open ends of the annular working space adjacent such flange.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Currently Amended): A wheel support bearing assembly, comprising:
inner and outer members defining an annular working space therebetween, and
accommodating lubricated rolling elements within the annular working space; and
a sealing member fitted to one of the inner or outer members and sealing an open end of the annular working space, the sealing member having
an approximately ~~constant~~ uniform annular cross section,
at least one elastic sealing lip maintaining sliding contact with a sealing surface defined on the remaining one of the inner or outer members, or on a sealing contact member fitted to the remaining one of the inner or outer members, and
an axially innermost elastic sealing lip extending axially inwardly of the annular working space and defining a gap between an end thereof and the sealing surface, a size of the entire gap gradually increasing in a direction away from the sealing surface and inwardly of the annular working space, the gap being sized to permit flow of air therethrough and provide a non-contact sealing effect to prevent a lubricant from exiting therethrough during relative rotation between the inner and outer members.

13. (Currently Amended) A wheel support bearing assembly, comprising:
an outer member having an inner peripheral surface formed with a plurality of outer raceways;
an inner member positioned inside the outer member with an annular working space defined between it and the outer member, said inner member having an outer peripheral surface

formed with inner raceways in mating relation with the respective outer raceways in the outer member;

rows of rolling elements accommodated within the annular working space and rollingly received in part within the outer raceways in the outer member and in part within the inner raceways in the inner member; and

at least one sealing member fitted to one of the inner and outer members sealing one of opposite open ends of the annular working space delimited between the inner and outer members, said sealing member having a plurality of elastic sealing lips which extend towards a sealing surface defined directly on the other of the inner and outer members or defined on a sealing contact member fitted to the other of the inner and outer members, one of said elastic sealing lips extending in a direction generally axially inwardly of the annular working space and defining an axially innermost sealing lip while the other elastic sealing lips being kept in sliding contact with the sealing surface;

wherein the innermost sealing lip is a non-contact sealing lip leaving an annular gap between a free end thereof and the sealing surface of the sealing contact member, a radial size of the entire gap gradually increases in a direction away from the sealing surface area and inwardly of the annular working space while an axial size of the entire gap is constant along the circumference of the free end of the innermost lip, said gap being of a size sufficient to

permit flow of air therethrough, and

prevent a lubricant from passing therethrough and to provide a non-contact sealing effect when a relative rotation takes place between the outer and inner members.

14. (New): A wheel support bearing assembly, comprising:

inner and outer members defining an annular working space therebetween, and accommodating lubricated rolling elements within the annular working space; and

a sealing member fitted to one of the inner or outer members and sealing an open end of the annular working space, the sealing member having

at least one elastic sealing lip maintaining sliding contact with a sealing surface defined on the remaining one of the inner or outer members, or on a sealing contact member fitted to the remaining one of the inner or outer members, and

an axially innermost elastic sealing lip defining a single circumference thereof, extending axially inwardly of the annular working space, and defining a gap between an end thereof and the sealing surface, the gap being sized to permit flow of air therethrough and provide a non-contact sealing effect during relative rotation between the inner and outer members.